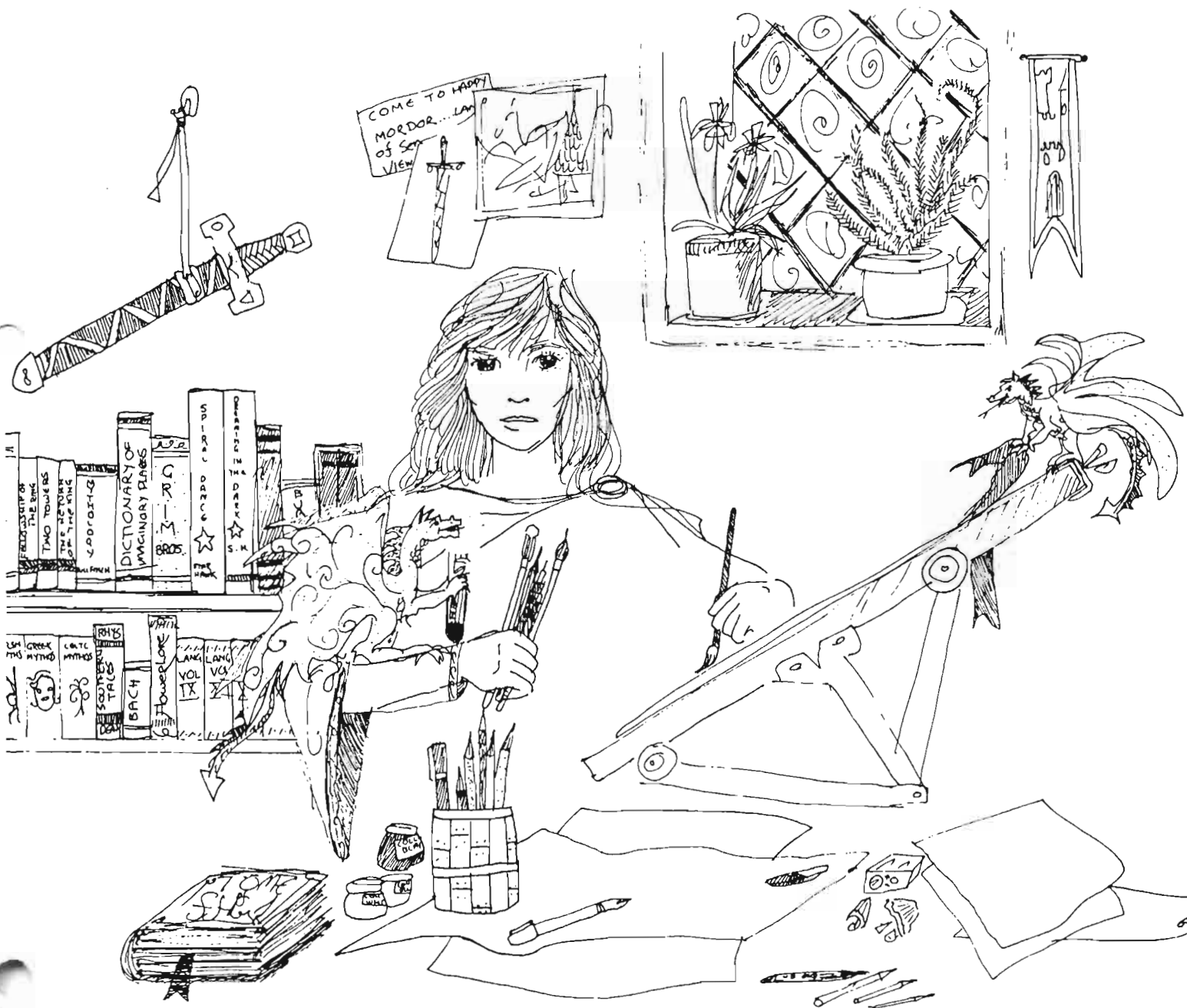


Weber Woman's Wrevenge

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THE RUBBISH BIN

The biggest event in my life the past few months has been my participation in a "Self-Transformations" course, which I talk about on page 2.

This course followed a lot of reading last year on Paganism, philosophy and psychology, and synchronicity contributed a whole range of related happenings: everywhere I turned, something fit in with what I was learning in the course and in my reading. Far too much to go into here, now, but you'll spot references in the book reviews and other places in this zine.

Other articles this time include a piece by a non-fannish friend of mine, Dave Dismore; his thoughts serve as one response to Adrienne Fein's questions last time. More readers write their about their views of love, and Lyn McConchie tells a bit about the other side of child abuse -- the distressed parent. Lyn also offers a brief anecdote from her apparently inexhaustible stock of true-life animal tales, and another whimsical "Rabbit's Progress".

Another provocative article from Greg See-Kee, and the usual letters and book reviews, round out this issue. I do hope the various Post Offices between my house and yours cooperate in getting this copy to you reasonably expeditiously. Overseas readers have probably figured out that November's mailing was delayed an extra month or more by Australia Post.

DIARY NOTES

Eric's been visiting fairly regularly, for a week or two at a time (broken by 1-to-3 weeks at his place), a schedule that's worked out fairly well. He came down in mid February to help with driving my car back to his place for my birthday party on the weekend of the 23rd. I'd taken a week off, so we went shopping one morning for microwave ovens and managed to get two on sale. So far we use them mostly for boiling water, thawing meat, and de-crystallizing honey, but I'm sure we'll develop a wider repertoire when we have time to study the cookbook, Real Soon Now.

My birthday party was very enjoyable, more so than either Eric or I had expected. He'd envisioned at least twice as many people descending on his house, but there were only

about 20. I was pleased because several people showed up that I had not expected to see -- and not a single smoker (some of whom I am very fond of, but they ended up standing on the balcony at intervals). The party was quiet and full of interesting conversation, no one got drunk (or if they did, they kept it to themselves), and I had a chance to talk to people who are usually too busy watching videos or "partying". Most of the guests took advantage of the opportunity to sightsee in the area, and all left at mid-afternoon on Sunday, giving Eric and I a chance to clean up and recover.

I've also been swimming, three or four times a week before work. If Eric's here, he goes with me. It seems to be good for my back, and my endurance is improving steadily.

I got quite a surprise in March. George, the new General Manager (Marketing) at CSIRONET called me in and asked what I did and why I was where I was in the scheme of the place (documentation) rather than somewhere else (public relations). I was a bit tentative in my responses because the main reason that I'd resisted a transfer last year was not wanting to work under a certain person. Said certain person has now been transferred himself, and I didn't know who might be taking his place. I get along well with my present supervisor (he essentially lets me do as I please, a very enlightened attitude).

Anyway, after a few minutes George says he thinks not only should I be in PR, but I should be the person in charge! I almost fell off my chair. I thought I'd have to make a case (in triplicate, and in blood) to get that position, and here I was being offered it out of the blue. I didn't have to think very long before I said yes. There were several catches, like too few people to do an expected increased workload (but my work would have increased anyway; at least this way I get some recognition for it - no extra money, though chance of promotion later), but overall I'm delighted. For several weeks, though, I was working my ass off, and poor Eric (who was visiting) was called up to cook and do laundry as well as wash up. He seems to have survived, and things have quieted down a bit. We are about to take a week's drive through Victoria (late April), visiting various hacker friends of Eric, feminist friends of mine, and fannish friends of us both. Should be a pleasant break before the next wave of work hits me: I don't expect to get my head above water again much before Aussiecon.

- Jane

SELF TRANSFORMATIONS

by Jean Weber

In February I participated in a "Self-Transformations" course (hereafter referred to as ST1). Some of you may recall Joy Window remarking on the course in the pages of Weberwoman's Wrevenge last year ("I used to be a Pagan, but now I'm just me", Vol 3, No 5, March 1984). Gordon Lingard, who lives with Joy and who did ST1 before her, recommends it too. I had remarked at the time that I'd like to take the course too, if only one were given in Canberra. Last year, ST opened a Centre in Canberra, and this February I finally found it convenient to attend.

ST1 encompasses much the same techniques as many such courses in America, like EST. It's all about getting in touch with your feelings and expressing them, meditation and stress management, learning to like yourself and accept yourself as you are, and the power of positive thinking. There's a lot of metaphysics involved which I (and apparently many of the course participants) think is so much bullshit, but the instructors are quite happy if you don't "believe" the "reasons" they give -- the techniques they teach, such as meditation, work anyway.

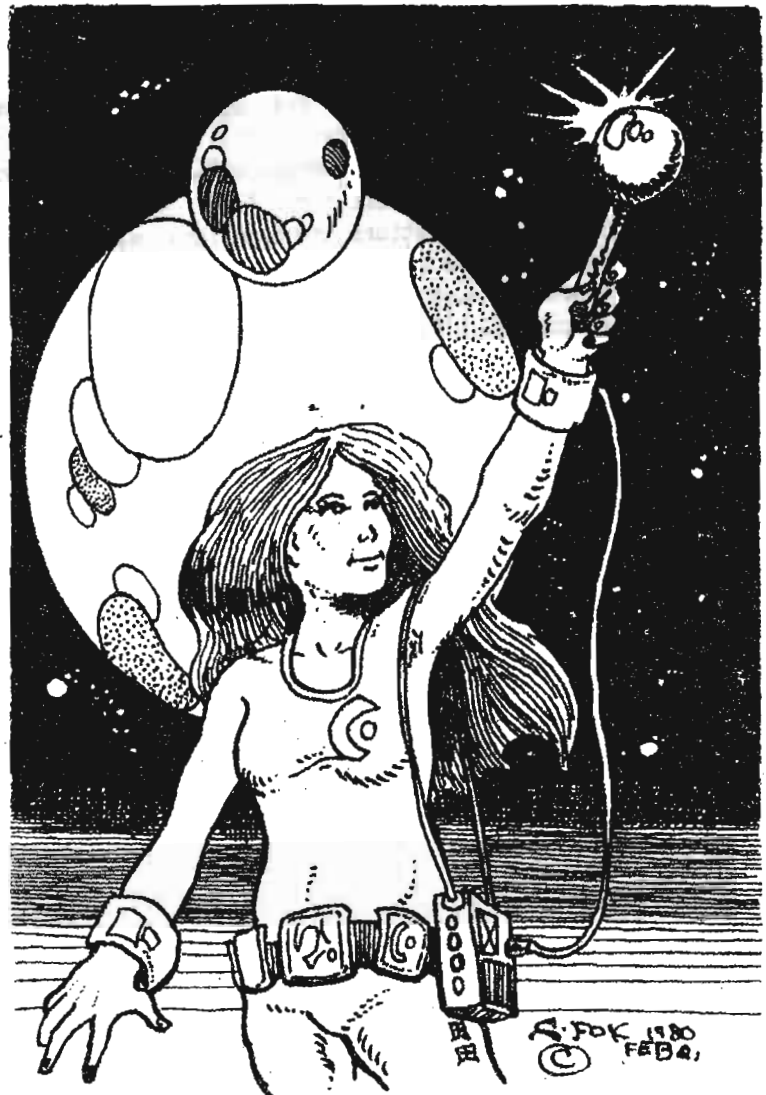
I have had enough experience with much of what they teach, to know that it does work for me, so the bullshit didn't get in the way. However, this is the first time I've had quite so much diverse material all brought together into one framework, one "world view". For example, their exposition of the Law of Synchronicity made all sorts of things fall neatly into place. And, although I've been taught meditation techniques twice before, this was the first time anyone gave a thorough discussion of what's (allegedly) happening and why; what certain experiences mean and how to deal with them, and so on. Again, much fragmentary knowledge and experience fit together suddenly.

Several people complained about Joy's article that she wrote too much in generalities about the course, and didn't say what they DID in it. Having now been through it myself, I can certainly see why. It's definitely a case of "you had to BE there to appreciate it". It wasn't so much what

we did as how we reacted, or how we felt about it, that mattered. Each person reacted differently to the exercises, and telling about the exercises themselves can give a false impression of what we experienced.

One of the major components of the course was "sharing". During each class, we would all do several exercises or "processes". Afterwards we would sit in pairs or groups and tell each other what we experienced and how we felt about it. The different reactions were almost as enlightening as our own.

For example, several times I felt rather smug, when many in the class were acting as if they'd had these great revelations and I was thinking, "but I've known (or done) that for years." Usually this had to do with topics like "getting in touch with your anger". Listening to



others talk would remind me how many other people haven't made that personal breakthrough, and I'd become a bit more understanding.

This was just as well, because on a couple of the class nights, Eric was at my place, so when I got home, I'd try to explain some of my insights to him. It is not helpful to act superior ("I'm all right, what's the matter with you") at such times. Eric is slowly learning that, for example, it's actually less threatening to him for me to express anger than to not express it (not feeling anger isn't one of the choices).

He (and some other men in my recent past) seem to believe that anger at one's mate is a sign of Something Wrong. Either anger itself is a no-no (in the case of the other men) or expressing it is too dangerous (in Eric's case). He has mentioned that if he really gets angry, he'll lose control and hurt someone. I have tried to explain that I do that too, but only if I try to deny the anger or hold it in: what happens is that it builds up and eventually explodes in an uncontrollable fashion. If I let off steam at the time, it's gone. It doesn't fester. I rarely hold grudges, because I get my feelings out in the open before they develop into grudges. I think he's beginning to understand this, not only intellectually but emotionally.

I didn't feel any great dramatic breakthroughs from the course, but all sorts of things have been happening lately, so maybe I have changed without realising it. One of the things they teach is that, if you feel good about yourself and your relationship with life, the universe and everything, good things tend to happen around you. Sort of the flip-side of the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is usually talked about in its negative aspects. And a workmate reckoned that I've been acting much happier, friendlier and more efficient since the course -- which really surprised me since I hadn't noticed any change at all. (She's now taking the course herself.)

MUSINGS

I'm still working on figuring out What It All Means. There were several reasons I took the course. One was the feeling of being at loose ends. I sorted that out to the following: I used to have a bunch of goals in my life. I've now achieved those goals (several years ago), but haven't developed new ones. I knew I was having trouble deciding where I wanted to go in my "career" but hadn't quite seen that in its broader perspective. I didn't realise until later that my subconscious had apparently made a

decision -- when offered the chance for "advancement", I grabbed it; several months ago I would probably have been very ambivalent or even negative. I also realised that my attitude about the job was similar to the overall feeling: I'd got good enough and practiced enough at what I do in my present job that there wasn't much challenge in it -- and I definitely need challenge. I thrive on challenge. So the new position, though more work, will take me into areas I've not done before: management areas. Suddenly it sounds enticing; I know I can do the job (though I also know I'll need to learn a whole new collection of skills, immediately if not sooner). Six months or a year ago I think I would have been scared. Talk about positive thinking, eh

Lots of topics came up in ST1 which I've met elsewhere. Many of those are the category of things that are very hard to explain to anyone who doesn't already know (and preferably agree with) what you're talking about. Especially when the concept is sufficiently metaphysical (and hence "unprovable"), it's very much open to interpretation; and in my past experience, interpretation can easily become perversion, turning a liberating idea into an enslaving one. I will elaborate.

CREATING YOUR OWN REALITY

The first thing that struck me here was the difficulty in explaining the difference between accepting the responsibility for every aspect of your life and taking the blame for things. A person with the "victim mentality" sees himself at the mercy of outside forces or people. Learning that one can "create one's own reality" should counteract that, but it's easily perverted: if I'm responsible for what happens to me, then I'm to blame when it all goes wrong -- I can't blame it on them. Not much of an improvement, really.

Part of this is related to the way everyone's conditioned by society's rules on "right" and "wrong", "should" and "should not". Many of us have rejected this conditioning, to some extent, but it's still there in our subconscious, manipulating us in sneaky ways we don't recognise. Including our reactions in areas where we've chosen to have goals. So the solution, I suppose, is to get in touch with our subconscious as much as we can, to get rid of as much of that conditioning as we can. Certainly knowing (or understanding intellectually) what causes us to act a certain way isn't enough; we have to put that knowledge to use. I find this amazingly difficult to do at times.

And then there's Eric, who has created for himself a reality that does not offer him any opportunity to combine paid employment with doing something he enjoys. Although I can easily hypothesize such circumstances (for him, in my version of "reality"), he can't. He believes those opportunities aren't there, so they don't exist, for him. I've been trying to explain to him that the key is to be able to fantasize (not necessarily believe, at first) being paid to do something he enjoys. That seems to me to be the first step. One of several possibilities after that first step is to then go looking for ("creating") circumstances like those fantasized. It works for me; it works for thousands of other people; it could work for Eric.

I'M OKAY THE WAY I AM

Another area of misunderstanding is that of learning to love oneself the way one is. I've heard this denounced as an easy excuse for not changing or improving (usually said about someone else, whom the speaker feels needs improvement). And of course in its perverted form, that's just what this idea amounts to. But the notion is not that being "okay" (or "perfect" in some schools) means you can't or won't or have no need to change. It does mean that if you've created your own reality, you are perfect for that reality. But you can also change that reality, if/when you want to. Then you will probably want or feel the need to change your self to fit that new reality. (Maybe I've got it backwards; maybe you change yourself before, or simply as part of, the reality change. The point has to do with why change is possible.) (And one of these days I'll try to explain why I believe change is necessary and desirable. I tend to equate "growth" with "change" -- though not all change is growth -- and consider personal growth just about the most important aspect of life. It always astounds me when people disagree.)

FAITH HEALING

We talked a lot about illness in the context of creating one's own reality. I've long known that one's body's reaction to health and disease is greatly related to what's going on in one's mind, especially the subconscious. You may not be able to avoid the consequences of, say, cutting your hand on a piece of broken glass, but the speed of your body's recovery is certainly related to your general mental health as well as your physical health. (Again, this is a wonderful area for people to accept blame -- for, say, "malingering".)

I've been particularly interested in this topic because of my back problem. I know quite well that as long as I feel a victim of circumstances, my back will probably plague me. On the other hand -- and here's where I see a dangerous trap -- by believing that I can create my reality to include a healthy back, I might be depriving myself of needed medical care. Where do I draw the line Should I have declined to have the tumour in my nose removed, in the belief that I could get rid of it myself I don't think so. (Since I didn't believe I could, I'm quite sure I couldn't have.) Also I'm a bit dubious about symptom relief. I may learn how to stop my back from hurting; that's nice. But I believe pain is nature's way of telling you something's wrong. If the "something wrong" needs medical intervention, taking the attitude of "ignore it and it will go away" just might be a recipe for worse trouble later. Complex, tricky area here.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANIPULATION

All of these topics open up wonderful areas for people to manipulate each other. I don't think I need to go into the details; you all have lively imaginations.



THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

ISN'T DEAD

by Dave Dismore

OK, I admit it is impolite to interrupt the funeral during the eulogy, but with the "deceased" in embarrassingly good health, I thought a word or two of protest just might be in order.

The uncooperative corpse is the Sexual Revolution, and the cause of its attempted premature burial is not a world-class case of herpes, but an even worse malady afflicting a lot of the folks performing the editorial autopsies.

Yes, I'm referring to the dreaded scourge of graphophilia (often called "Sociologist's Disease" because its primary symptom is a compulsion to reduce abstract thoughts, ideas and feelings into precise statistics neatly plotted out on charts and graphs).

But the problem with statistics is that they record only what people do, rather than why they do it. In judging any liberation movement, however, it's the degree of free choice that it has given to people that's the best measure of its success, rather than the nontraditionality of the choices individuals may make with that freedom.

To give just one example of some typical Olympic-caliber conclusion-jumping based on a questionable premise, it seems to be assumed that someone's degree of sexual liberation is directly proportional to how sexually active he or she is -- especially regarding nontraditional choices. So, one of the figures that's now being cited as proof that more and more people are "rejecting liberation" in favor of "traditional values" is a survey which indicates that the number of female college students who have had premarital sex has dropped by almost a third in just a few years.

Well, I've never been female, and haven't been in college for awhile, but I do happen to be a virgin, so I guess I'd be stereotyped as even more of a sexual "counter-revolutionary" than any of those students. Guess again! It turns out that I'm a long-time active feminist and vocal advocate of liberation in all forms who can't see any conflict between what I promote and what I've practiced.

That's because liberation recognizes that nature has a lot more imagination than we've given her credit for, and she's made diversity a



valuable part of our humanness. So, on the delightful spectrum of nonexploitive sexual alternatives, different things are natural and right for different people.

In fact, different choices can even be right for the same person at various times in their life. The important thing is that sexuality ought to be whatever you want it to be so long as honesty and responsibility are exercised.

For some, sex might become something they think of as relatively casual, while for others it might be something they consider very, very special -- or it could be anything in between. One way to make it as special and meaningful as it has the potential to be is to associate it only with a firmly established, genuinely loving relationship with a very special person -- even though all that may not come along conveniently early in life.

So, though I'm consistently non-conformist in nonsexual areas, I do have to plead guilty to "premature monogamy". There's always been a persistent feeling that the right choice for me is to stay a virgin until I meet that "very special" woman so that unique kind of sharing, learning and bonding known as sex will always seem to me like "our" special experience -- even though "we" may not have met just yet or established that future relationship.

I don't know how many other people share those feelings, or would be comfortable about expressing them. But I do think that one of the reasons fewer people are separating sex from love (or commitment) is that those who have an instinctive aversion to doing so are developing an increasing resistance to peer, partner and media pressures to use sex as "proof" of maturity, devotion or self-worth.

That resistance to pressure sounds exactly like the self-confidence, self-determination and pride in one's feelings and values that true liberation instills.

The first signs of a need for that final evolutionary step were brought out about four years ago in a survey by Cosmopolitan magazine. Though more readers expressed strong support for liberation's benefits, a substantial minority admitted that they sometimes felt "uncomfortable" about saying "no" and that they'd had sexual experiences they really didn't want.

Half the respondents thought there might be a need to have some sort of "counterrevolution" to undo the "trivialization" of sex that liberation had allegedly brought. A few even expressed nostalgia for the days when a date didn't automatically expect sex -- or consider a reluctance to share physical intimacy before establishing emotional closeness to be some sort of embarrassing hangup.

But dissatisfaction with the status quo doesn't automatically imply an imminent return to the behavioral stait jackets, fear, ignorance, stereotypes and double standards of the "good old days". The disappointments expressed by some in that survey won't be cured by dismantling the gains of the past 20 years and giving up the freedom to say "yes" in order to regain the right to say "no".

But neither should we be complacent and merely defend our half-complete revolution. Instead, it's now time to fight harder than ever for TOTAL liberation -- a world in which a "no", a "not yet" and a "yes" are given equal and unqualified respect by oneself, a potential partner and by society.

If the right to freely and comfortably say "no" when the circumstances aren't right is finally beginning to get equal emphasis with the right to just as freely and comfortably say "yes" when the circumstances are right, then what we're seeing now is not the death of the Sexual Revolution, but the end of its adolescence, and the beginning of an absolutely fantastic maturity.

-- Dave Dismore is coordinator of the Feminist Alert Network in Los Angeles. This article first appeared in The Middlesex News, Framingham, Massachusetts, 3 September 1984.

LEARNING FROM FILMS

by Lewis Morley

1) Widows

Marilyn and I sat through all six hours of a three-part miniseries called "Widows", totally enthralled. In terms of plot, acting and production values, it was up to the normal high quality of British shows. However, it was the writing, and in particular the characterisation of the four female bank robbers, that impressed me.

I can't think of another film that has given me such an insight into the protagonists, all of whom were women in leading roles. With the exception of Bella, the black prostitute, whose role was annoyingly sketchy, all the characters were seen in a variety of situations that allowed their characters to fully emerge. I suspect this might have had something to do with the fact that the scriptwriter was a woman, as the film dealt more with people and their interactions rather than a technical detailing of the heist.



I got a very real feeling for the "real" world, one which was totally male dominated. Men were in control and they treated their secretaries and wives with condescension at best and more often with pure contempt. The police inspector trying to catch a bank robber believed to be dead is arrogant to everyone, especially his secretary, yet is she he turns to and appreciates when he loses his job, not his wife. Needless to say, this is not a personal relationship; he simply needs information to further his obsession.

The strange thing (although, taken within the context of the criminal environment, normal) is that when the robbers' widows assume a level of independence and attempt a robbery, they express no enlightenment. They act in a similar manner to the men; they use the same sexist and derogatory language and yet, where it is of use to them, they take advantage of the social "privileges" granted to women. (The boss organises a robbery while being tailed by police, by meeting in ladies' lavatories -- a very firm no-man's land.)

It is only in their relationships with each other that the female robbers differ from the men they emulate. One sees deep down a caring amongst them, a bond created from more than basic greed. In fact, the whole robbery is mounted not because they really need the money but rather because they are striking back at the society that indirectly took their husbands from them.

The final result was a satisfactory series that only seems possible outside the American fantasy machine. One cringes to think what the American networks would have made of the premise. In this country we have produced "Scales of Justice" that has a similar theme, and "Women of the Sun" about aboriginal life, so it seems that television from a woman's viewpoint has not been entirely neglected.

2) Not a Love Story

I saw "Not a Love Story", a documentary about pornography, which was followed by a series of rather selfconscious discussion groups to analyse what had been seen. I did not know how I was going to react to the film, as I had had more than a passing obsession with the subject during my uptight late adolescence. I found the subject rarer much further than poorly composed photographs printed on cheap paper. Watching the film, I realised the wider social implications of this phenomenon and how it manipulated people's lives. My overwhelming emotion was one of total confusion: no one had told me about this...

At first I was too unsettled to take part in the discussion. Marilyn and I had a long discussion of how it affected us personally and also our relationship. Feeling very uninformed, I emerged from my savage introspection to listen to the voices around us. The men were all standing up and pontificating as if they had just seen a Bergman film. Everything was referred to in the third person, as if they had all been merely observers. They went on about what they thought of it, but now how they felt. I was too agitated to listen; it seemed no one was on the level: "Yes, pornography is a bad thing, not that I personally have any experience, etc etc."

I don't know, maybe my perception was twisted by the shakeup I'd just had -- maybe that was just the way I interpreted the conversation -- I didn't wait to find out. I spent the rest of my time there seated in the corridor waiting for Marilyn to come out, much too involved with my own experience to listen to anyone else's.

As I write this, I am still confused. I've begun to see how pernicious and often disguised pornography is, how it seems to be an integral facet of our society -- or at least one that is tolerated.

When I was a child, I decided prejudice was a bad thing and I would not be prejudiced. I worked the logic through and realised I would never be able to decide whether I wanted chocolate or strawberry ice-cream. I reached a compromise. I decided that I would be aware of my prejudices and in so doing I could make rational decisions.

Racism was an easy target. Being less than pure Aryan (my grandmother was Chinese), I could appreciate the problems of discrimination because of racial differences -- even though I've never had such troubles.

It was only in late adolescence that I began to realise what sexism was. A friend told me the "Beach Boys" were sexist. "What's that" I asked in all innocence. I'd previously thought the boyish habit of putting girls down was "cool" and "smart". I now realised it was no different from racism. My so-called "awareness" had let me down badly. So it was that other night when I watched a bleached 16mm documentary.

There isn't an end to this letter or my stumbling steps towards more awareness of myself and the society around me. I only hope I can eventually approach the ideals I set myself as a child.

We never stop finding out new things, but we can stop learning from them. I hope I don't.

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

by Lyn McConchie

Years ago I lived in a cottage behind a big old house. I shared the place with two cats, Tigger (whom I still have) and his mother Kits (now gone to that big home in the sky).

The main house had a huge outside bathroom/laundry, where if one wanted a bath, one locked the door, ran cold water into the bath, baled hot out of the copper at the end of the bath and climbed in.

I had been out with friends on this particular night, and had spent several hours dancing. By the time I arrived home around midnight, I was feeling tired and grubby, and a nice long hot soak in the bath was just the thing before bed.

I have always enjoyed reading in the bath, and thinking that since everyone else must be in bed by now, no one would be inconvenienced, I climbed into all the lovely hot water with my latest book and relaxed.

Believing myself alone, I was really getting into the book, a dramatic and well

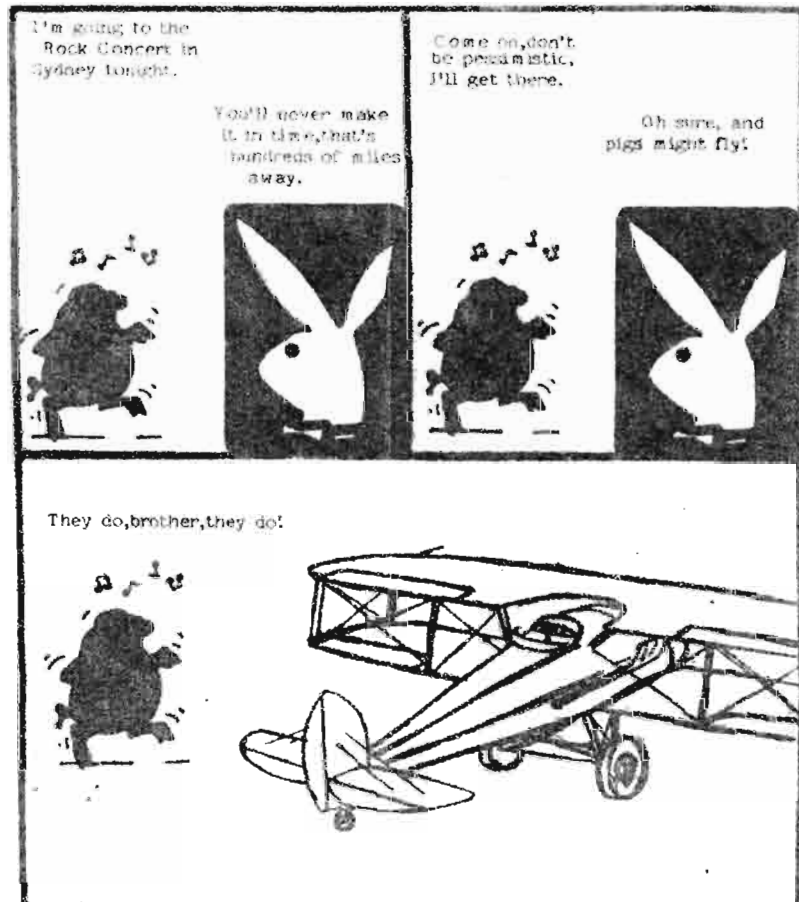
written account of the Boston Strangler. However, unbeknown to me, Kits was up in the rafters doing a little quiet bird hunting. She looked down, observed that her human had returned, and flowed silently down the studs to greet me.

By this time I was totally immersed in the book, having just reached the part where the Boston Strangler, having inveigled his way into his victim's flat, takes her from behind by the throat.

At this point Kits, who had jumped onto the corner of the bath behind me, became indignant at being ignored and reached forward, patting me on the shoulder from behind.

The book went one way, and I and a large quantity of bath water went hurtling out of the bathroom with a sound reminiscent of a goosed Banshee. As authors say, I will draw a veil over the rest of the scene.

Have you ever tried to explain to several bewildered friends, why you are screaming in the back yard at midnight, in the nude and soaking wet?



The Rabbit's Progress

by Lyn McConchie

MORE VIEWS OF LOVE

DEBI KEAN (New Zealand): "There are of course, different types of love. C S Lewis noted four. But the one preoccupying every adult is the love between consenting and unrelated adults -- love which may or may not have a sexual outcome or component.

"Like virtually every woman in her 30s, I've been married. Technically, it will be my tenth anniversary in 3 months time (I've not bothered with a divorce). Love didn't enter into that marriage at any stage.

"Anyone who's met me since April 1980 knows about Les. We were together not quite a year, and lost contact finally only after a further tortuous 2 years. I loved Les, and still do. I can't define that, I simply KNOW it's love. Also, that I've not experienced love (or similar love) with anyone else, before or since Les and I lived together. I was, and am, a Christian, as then was he; we had a lot of working out to do, in terms of our moral values.

"I believe that Christian 'sexual' morality was/is intended to prevent people hurting each other. Relationships with men who did not accept that morality, inevitably hurt ME, though I did not love these men, in the true man-woman sense. With totally different ethical systems, these two men did not consider themselves under any obligation to be faithful, or to regard my feelings.

"Love requires faithfulness, I think. (Unless both parties agree otherwise -- and that both parties agree WITH EQUAL COMMITMENT to an 'open' relationship, is very rare, I've observed.)

"Love also requires honesty. I am beginning to have an obsession with honesty, I see. Les, who warned that he might not be, was scrupulously honest! No many I've met since has been as honest, and each lie cuts away at the trust which is such a necessary part of love.

"Right now (early March '85), I am struggling with two and a half problematic relationships with men. I've know one of them nearly a year. What I intended to be a platonic friendship, became very complicated indeed, about 3 months back. He was giving out very mixed signals. I asked him to clarify his feelings, and the result: One glorious quarrel. End of friendship -- because, I am convinced, he LIED to me. I'm still trying to find out.



"The half? A chap who wanted too much, too soon. He wound up with nothing, but we're still in touch. Now he's no longer piling on the pressure, I LIKE him.

"The other is a man I liked virtually the moment I met him. But the more I know him, the LESS I know him. I'm trying to understand him now -- surely a prerequisite for love

"My ideal is still a monogamous and 'permanent' (i.e. for the foreseeable future) relationship. But it's an ideal no one I really like, shares.

"Meanwhile, I love a man who's thousands of kays away, in Brisbane. I LIKE other men, I (possibly) love another, but if it's love, it's of an unfamiliar sort.

"What is love I think, if you feel it, you know -- even if you can't define it."

JOY HIBBERT (UK): "Romantic love to me is like a 'high'. But there are other forms of love, calmer, longer lasting ones, not necessarily basically sexual ones, and ecstasy, to me, is the combination of romantic love with one of these longer lasting ones."

PAMELA BOAL (UK): "To me love is that state where I consider the other's welfare of greater import than my own. In each case the accompanying emotions differ, depending on the nature of the relationship be it husband, children, grandchild, parents or true friend. Admiration for the other's qualities, companionship, pride, sex may be facets of love, additions to, even original causes of, but are not love... An odd belief that we should receive love as a right has certainly grown up in our culture. Receive it, not give it or create a climate in which it can grow.

When feminists started to emphasise that physical attraction was not love, our capitalistic society came up with an answer: sell emotional improvement! Call it religion, cults, psychology, psychiatry, what ever you will, it's all the hard sell of the impossible dream. You can't buy or create love, it grows in the right atmosphere -- and it seems to me that our Western society makes it ever more difficult for such an atmosphere to exist."

((I think some of these 'emotional improvement' fads can help people get in touch with their own feelings and motives, thus helping create the atmosphere in which love can grow: see my article on Self Transformations in this issue. -- JHW))

DIANE FOX (Australia): "The qualities that make a good partner for a love affair need not necessarily be those that make an ideal life-long partner who must help in the purchase of a home, its upkeep, etc, and possibly in the raising of children... Infatuation isn't necessarily a stage in love or a relationship, but in many cases it may be needed to get the relationship started."

BEV CLARK (USA): "My sister was briefly married to a man who thought that it was a man's right and duty to keep his wife in line by whatever means necessary. Worse, his mother and sister agreed with him, and his mother blithely told my sister that her husband had beat her for years but that was a husband's right. My sister wasn't convinced, and the second time it happened, she fought back, and then left. (Then she had to fight her ex-husband's family to get any of her personal possessions back, because the family thought everything in a marriage belonged to the husband, even if it had been the wife's before the marriage.) This is in the 20th century, in a big city, where you might expect some sophistication. God only knows what attitudes might be like in a small town or out in the backwoods."

MAIA (USA): "I'd agree (with Greg See-Kee) that 'love' as it's normally meant is a bizarre cultural phenomenon, unrealistic and unreasonable. I actually have friends who ask, 'Will a relationship work if you don't feel that "spark"' This, about people who are compatible and comfortable in all ways, but still worried

because they're not 'in love' (i.e., they don't get heart palpitations and double vision in their partner's presence). In my observation, a relationship is far MORE likely to work out if you're NOT in love when it commences; less likelihood of unrealistic expectations and blind spots.

"Several things (Alex Stewart) says just boggle me: '... the one I'm usually adamant about is never sleeping with friends.' Then who does he sleep with Strangers Enemies He doesn't consider his lovers to be friends Oh, well. And he refers to 'simple uncomplicated friendship'. An oxymoron, in my experience -- the better I get to know someone, the more complicated (complex, involving) the friendship becomes. The only way I see to keep things simple is to keep them superficial. Not very satisfying.

"I'm judging his situation, as he describes it, from my own viewpoint; never the best way to judge someone else's life. But I still have one small suggestion, and he's welcome to tell me I'm wrong: Have you considered that it may be impossible to both keep people near you and keep yourself distanced from them I'd be curious to know which price he would rather pay: keeping his freedom at the cost of staying separated from people, or seeking companionship at the risk of emotional vulnerability. It would probably require realizing that whatever price he feels he's paying now, he's not getting for it what he thought he was.

"Fidelity. A tricky concept, that. 'Faithful' to what, to whom, in what way I get rather offended by people who equate 'fidelity' with certain sexual practices (or restraint therefrom). A love relationship is certainly based on much more than sexual interest! Whether or not sexual fidelity is important probably depends on (a) the degree of security within the relationship (and some people feel MORE loved when their partner is jealous -- I suppose it demonstrates how bad the partner would feel not to have one, and therefore how valued the relationship is; but I for one don't need that kind of reminder!); (b) the level of identification with societal mores (we have to be 'faithful' because otherwise, gee, that's adultery!); and (c) what else the relationship has going for it. If you have many things to share, sex is relatively less important as a reason to have the relationship."

-) (-

WHERE HAVE ALL THE BRAINY WOMEN GONE?

by Gregory See-Kee

((First published in the Australian apa Applesauce, December 1984.))

The brainy men have gone to war, raping women's bodies and labour, working on "defence" department contracts, protecting society from "evil, injustice and crime". But where are the brainy women?

A few of us guys went around, draft-resisting and making ASIO put us onto their data banks. We've come across brainy women, hidden in Women's Health Centres, Family Planning Clinics, Rape Crisis Centres, the Quakers movement and/or reforming "bad men" in totally consuming one-to-one relationships. These women are much the same as we remember them in high school -- pretending that they were no good at science and maths, feigning dumbness and shyness.

On talk-back radio, I mentioned this to Debra from Women's Electoral Lobby. I told her of Eva Cox, on the "Coming Out" radio show, saying that women are into "kitchen sink" politics -- wages for housework, childcare, family welfare. Women are avoiding the more important, over-riding issues of economics, and the blooming "defence" industries.

In my experience, it is difficult to put women onto career paths. As an honorary consultant to several welfare organizations, I notice the many women who waste the staff development dollars we have painfully and expensively invested into them. Instead, she follows her man, or becomes a career housewife, like endless clones before her.

BRAINY WOMEN I HAVE MET

"One day you and I are going for a long holiday out bush. I've never met a man as understanding as you, and I've gone through more men than any non-working woman I have ever met.

"I must tell you about Derrick... my mum and dad offered to buy us a unit to live in. I've been with him for three years now, and it's been quite a struggle to teach him something about being romantic, and not being such a quick-shot with his prick. With him, I have to pretend that I don't know how to fix the car and that I never did work as a technical officer. He's such a softie really. He's touring with a country and western band for a few months.

"I prefer women, but it's harder to keep the relationship going, and even harder to find women with any intelligence.

"My ambition is to be an arranger with a television station band. I used to like hitching

overseas... Asia, India and Europe. I learn all kinds of languages very easily, so when Robyn Archer told me to get out of Darwin, to do something with my life, and to get down to Sydney's Conservatorium, I just made it in time from the Darwin Women's Centre for the audition.

"Look! Here's my business card. I didn't mention on this one that I'm a teacher and in the two bands, only that I'm a free-lance arranger.

"...Puss!! Get out of the fridge!

"The trouble with sharing a house is finding someone who is as fastidious as I am about defrosting fridges and all that. I believe that being a good cook, keeping an ultra clean house, and having the approval of lots of friends comes before anything else. Sometimes I think I spend too much time and money, shopping for bargains, going to restaurants and preparing meals.

"But every woman should be able to be a good housewife. I really like your old girlfriend Prue. Yes, when I find the right man, I'll get a house just like hers -- really nice and tidy and clean.

"I must tell you, Greg, that I disapprove of you going to The Playground and to Ruby Reds. Even if Christine (our shared lover) took you there. Those places are sacred sites to feminists and men are not welcome.

"And while we are on the subject, I will not ever go to the Feminist Bookshop or other feminist activities with you. When I am a feminist, I believe... I feel Separatist. There are some things that men should never understand and never will.

"Here you can have the Mensa test papers back now. They are all too easy. Anyway, it's all bullshit, elitist stuff. Women's music and Rape Crisis Centres are more important. Perhaps I'll marry Derrick and make house with him next year, so I won't need to be interesting in anything else.

"Don't forget to return MORE WOMEN OF WONDER. In my library I've collected all prominent women science fiction writers and the major women musicians. I've got to re-write the woodwind's part for tonight's performance now. It's one of Michael Jackson's. They want the latest hits, and this Sony Walkman doesn't bring out the bass well enough. I'll see you next week after Monday's rehearsal."

My comment: The woman quoted above is a real person, living in Sydney. Incidentally, she went to a Catholic girls' school.

THE OTHER SIDE OF CHILD ABUSE

by Lyn McConchie

Jessica Salmonson's ratio of 1 in 4 abused children holds good in this country too, unfortunately. Martyn Taylor said I should do something and not just moan. He is, of course, quite right; and I do. I am a councillor at the local Rape Crisis Centre. In that capacity I am very well aware that child abuse is not an occasional thing, but something which is horrifyingly common.

It is also horribly true that the abused child of one generation tends to become the abuser of the next. A survey here in N.Z. in the '70s showed that of women who had come under the notice of the Social Welfare as child abusers, 83% had been themselves abused as children.

Working at the Centre, I have come to feel that if more people spoke out, more abusers might seek help before things go so far. I remember a friend of mine six years ago, whose husband was out late most nights, leaving her stranded with a baby and an 18-month-old toddler, and with one arm out of commission because of an operation to remove a cancerous mole (the operation had taken a great chunk of muscle out of her upper arm).

The toddler, jealous of the baby, had reverted to baby behaviour, and was demanding as much attention as he could. One day when I was there during the morning, things just blew up. The toddler had deliberately woken the baby just as my friend had got her to go to sleep. The baby was teething anyway, and my friend had had little sleep for the last couple of nights (her husband always left these problems to her).

Unable to get the baby to go back to sleep, my friend tried a little feed in a bottle. Just as she had got the baby to drink and start dropping off again, the toddler rushed up and tried to climb into her lap. In doing so he not only woke the baby again, but also banged my friend's injured arm, really hurting her.

Before I could interevene, she had dumped the baby on the chair and grabbed the toddler, starting to hit him. These were not smacks but blows with a clenched fist what had all her strength behind them. I was on crutches at the time, and it was several minutes before I managed to get to her. When I did, I stopped her, got the toddler off to his bedroom, and returned to cope with my friend who had collapsed in an agony of guilt.



Had she done this in front of others I could think of, they would have phoned the welfare. She would possibly have been jailed for child abuse, and her life would have been ruined. All I did was let her cry herself into exhaustion and put her to bed also. Next day I phoned several mutual friends as well as her mother and sister, and suggested that she was finding things very hard in the circumstances, and some baby sitting would be a good thing. That all got done and after a couple more months her arm improved, the baby stopped teething and slept better, and the toddler became less jealous.

She confessed to me a year later that that had not been the first time she had beaten the child like that. But it never occurred again after the time I saw. I blame, not an exhausted and in pain woman, but her husband. He gave her no help or support, spent at least three nights a week out playing squash, and did nothing to help around the house.

Not everything is straightforward in these areas. Maybe I'm being simplistic, but I try not to judge, either Martyn, whose only real fault is writing letters when he is too tired to think about what he is saying, or my guardian, whose own problems were making his life as much of a hell for him as he made mine to me. The beatings I received were a form of twisted sexuality, as were the actual advances, caused by an incomplete understanding of his own needs and desires. Had there been any place or person he could have gone to for aid before things became so bad, I would not have suffered as I did.

NATTER AND ANTI- NATTER

((As usual, I have received far more mail than I could possibly fit into this fanzine, so I have had to leave most of it in the files. Some letters have been incorporated into other articles. --JHW))

JOSEPH NICHOLAS (UK): "(Jessica Amanda Salmonson) is too harsh on GOLDEN WITCHBREED. Admittedly, it does have its faults -- its 'tourist plot', for instance, in which the protagonist is dragged around as many different bits of the invented world as possible regardless of the actual dramatic or thematic necessity to visit them all -- and too many nakedly commercial elements for its own good -- with a female protagonist, liquid-eyed furry aliens, and a detailed imaginary world in which the reader can live out a fantasy life of vicarious power, how could it fail -- never mind being about a hundred pages longer than it really needs to be, but is nowhere near as badly written as Jessica claims. Quite well written, in fact; not beautifully, but smoothly, easily, cleanly... even with the invented alien words, whose meaning (as with the meanings of the obscure words Gene Wolfe used in his 'The Book of the New Sun' tetralogy) is delineated by their context and reinforced by their subsequent appearance, and whose only drawback is a surfeit of apostrophes between the syllables."

JOY HIBBERT (UK): "I think (Maia) is being unfair to THENDARA HOUSE. The tragedy of it, to my mind, was that far from being an insensitive clod, Peter really tried to be a decent human being, but just couldn't overcome the conditioning he had been subjected to. He just could not see Jaelle as a person in her own right. He is untypical of Terran male attitudes because of the effort he makes, because when he's in the right mood he realises that he's a right bastard. Most men don't even get this far."



"Why were Magda and Jaelle attracted to him Magda had grown up with him. It probably didn't occur to her to do anything else. Jaelle had intentionally kept herself away from men. She was a virgin and had never been in love, preferring to believe that all men are like those in the Dry Towns. When she found one who appeared to be different, she had her long-delayed first crush. Most of us have the good fortune to have our crushes (infatuations) while we're still legally children, and so don't end up half-killing the man after marrying him and having a miscarriage in the middle of nowhere. And of course Magda and Jaelle have their problems, largely caused by repressing problems instead of dealing with them. Magda still feels guilty about failing Peter by wanting to be more than a walking uterus, and has serious hangups about her sexuality. Jaelle is practically schizophrenic, her Dry Town upbringing fighting with the Renunciate veneer that she convinced herself was her reality."

MAIA (USA): "I don't object to books having 'style'. ALL books have style, it's just that some styles are more sophisticated, subtle, intrusive, etc. than others. I suspect that what Jessica Salmonson likes best are books where the style is the most important feature. In some cases I'd agree; in most the result is that only a small, select group CAN appreciate the effect. That's not style, that's elitism! Regardless of Jessica's criticism of GOLDEN WITCHBREED as 'silly', I'm not the least embarrassed to have enjoyed it immensely. It distracted me somewhat that there was a close resemblance to the

critical elements of LeGuin's THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS and Vinge's THE SNOW QUEEN; but I enjoyed the differences-in-the-similarities among these books.

The content -- the substance, not the form -- is what's most important to me. I live at a school where the art academy seems to place great emphasis on form, to the point there is no discernible substance. I suppose that art experts think the resulting works are wonderful, but for the rest of us they're simply inaccessible, and meaningless.

I wouldn't want popular literature, such as science fiction, to become similarly remote. Neither would I want to read only books where 'the idea is to tell the story and do nothing else'. But Jessica seems to be advocating an equally unpalatable extreme, where it doesn't matter what the story IS. I'll read a wide variety of styles and subgenres, but in general my preference is for a 'golden mean' where plot, characterization, idea and style all work together.

"I fully agree that Jaelle was acting like an idiot, and there was very little in either THE SHATTERED CHAIN or THENDARA HOUSE to make this understandable. But we can 'read between the lines' and consider her upbringing: first, the oppression and isolation of the Dry Town where she was raised -- and socialized to defer to men and expect them to treat her like dirt. Then, the equally isolated environment of the Guildhouse, where she was unlikely to encounter men often enough to learn different expectations and ways of relating to them. I'd say that because of her Dry Town background, she couldn't 'see' that Peter's behavior was abominable; it would be what she'd expect. And because of her Renunciate self-image (and denial of her childhood experiences), neither could she 'see' that she herself was behaving foolishly, and deluding herself. Throughout her experiences in the Terran Zone, she was resentful -- but powerless, and she accepted that powerlessness. As Kindra's fosterling, again she accepted the 'style' of the most powerful person in her life. Peter was obviously someone who expected to have his own way, and perhaps Jaelle was attracted because he was overbearing; it was what she expected and accepted. (She also followed Magda's lead, and was cowed by her sister Renunciates as often as not.)"

((Marion Zimmer Bradley tells us a lot more about Jaelle and Magda in CITY OF SORCERY (see review elsewhere), and it bears out what you and Joy say about them. -- JHW))

DIANE FOX (Australia): "Tanith Lee is one of my favourites, and I enjoyed DON'T BITE THE SUN and

SAPPHIRE WINE tremendously. SUN was one of the funniest and at the same time most depressing books I've read for some time. I saw her as not only depicting a future society but as making a commentary on contemporary life -- it is basically NOT easy to do anything really interesting or unusual or creative without being hassled by society. But I also enjoyed the three Demon Lord books."

IAN MCKEER (U.K.): "Style, I grant, is important, but hardly as all consuming as (Jessica Salmonson's) letter seems to imply, not for me anyway. Content has to be more important, though the way anything is said is certainly very important to the success of conveying the contents. I think the trouble with science fiction has always been that it values the idea (or scientific extrapolation in Salmonson's phrase) too much, not simply above symbolism, but above style, plot and characterisation as well, in too many cases. Given that that should be the case, I'd argue that SF attracts people who value those same things, ideas and extrapolation, and that to expect a sudden at large change in attitudes is therefore fanciful, to say the least. More likely, individuals find that their tastes change and read less SF, or none at all, but move on to works they find more stimulating and suited to their changing tastes."

((I'd agree, but it IS frustrating to those of us who want the ideas of SF packaged in the styles we've grown to prefer as our tastes change. --JHW))

BEV CLARK (USA): "I cannot recall any specific references to men's 'cycles', though I've also read about them. One of the things I recall is that male cycles may be much shorter than female ones, even occurring over the course of a single day. A man undergoes hormonal fluctuations in a day that can be as wide as the fluctuations of a woman throughout her cycle. Of course, in men, with no obvious cause, any sign of a cycle is simply written down to moodiness, stress, momentary anger, etc., and is not held against the gender as a whole. For that matter, variable moods that in women may be attributed to "that time of the month" may be tolerated.

"The head of the department I work with recently informed his new secretary that he is prone to moodiness and varying emotions. This is to excuse him if he snaps at her or castigates her for minor mistakes. If her were a woman, this would be considered bitchy. But he gets to blame it on 'a lot of things on my mind' and be praised for the intensity he puts into his work."

PATRICIA MCKINLAY (Australia): "My goodness (Greg See-Kee) aren't we in a depressed disgusted and negative frame of mind and aren't we just so right ... I say we because I was in much the same mood when I read the article the first time, but about considerably different circumstances. I appreciated your tone of voice no end.

"Having been brought up a Catholic (convent schools and all)... I have met some very sensible and intelligent ones and honestly they're not all neurotic -- no more neurotic than the rest of us. The Catholic religion, I feel, is a concentrated version of the same things that plague society.

"I agree with the rest of the article. I am fed up with people who (a) do not admit there is a problem; (b) pretend the problem is something else entirely; (c) think someone else should solve the problem. I am particularly fed up with group (b) because my job is FULL of numerous evasions of the central issue (I look after retarded persons in a state institution). These evasions, I feel, boil down to finding excuses for the fact that whatever you are planning is more for your benefit than the residents' (e.g. getting new curtains is an easy way to improve the environment -- ever so much simpler than finding something for the residents to DO which would improve their environment a hell of a lot more!!)"

KEITH ASAY (USA): "My attention span for close companionship with the opposite sex lasts about two hours, tops, and at that point I must change my mood to endure boredom. I find more to do while alone, than when I'm with someone... In today's world, if you don't have an active sex life, you are an oddity. I'm sorry but I defer and prefer to remain inactive... I refuse to believe I am lesser for the fact... I have no doubt I can engage in sexual activities when I desire, but the comfort of choosing not to do so is a feeling of self-pride."

((You should be particularly interested in Dave Dismore's article in this issue. -- JHW))

DAVE ROWLEY (UK): "What I find so ridiculous is the concept that only women scream. So a man happens to stumble over a corpse as he strolls through the night. Does he scream No chance. He just stands there and pisses himself."

CHRISTINE ASHBY (Australia): "I am careful never to leave myself open to potential embarrassment. This is presumably what Greg See-Kee would call 'tight-lipped and tight-arsed', but it's worked alright so far."

SUE THOMASON (UK): "Cohabitation terminology. I used to refer to Rory as 'my attached man', but as we're no longer living together, I suppose he's now 'my semi-detached man'..."

STEVE GREEN (UK): "Close scrutiny of (fanzine) lettercolumns soon reveals that the self-congratulatory pronouncements and associated pleas for greater openness far outnumber the actual instances of heart-to-heart revelation. Many are the spectators, few are the participants."

PATRICIA MCKINLAY (Australia): "I don't believe people are just bundles of conditioned reflexes. What I want to know is why some people never seems to get past the 'conditioned reflex' stage."

MAIA (USA): "Eric missed one useful term for a person with whom you're sharing living quarters and/or life: companion. It isn't used for conflicting connotations or ulterior meanings (as, for example, 'roommate', 'partner', 'mistress'), and it does mean just what it describes: people who are together, by choice, for a specific personal reason.

"I agree with Joy Hibbert's point that before we do something about a situation, we need to understand it. I was considering that a 'given', but it may not have been as obvious as I thought. My concern is that so many people act as if 'understanding' a problem IS the same as solving it. They develop increasingly baroque interpretations and analyses -- or those may be excuses, because for some reason the problem never goes away in spite of all the effort they put into it. (This, by the way, is my major grievance against Freudian analysis. It focuses on problems, not on solutions.)"

DIANE FOX (Australia): "Talking about the running of the world gives men a feeling that they have far more say in it than they actually have... women are less sure that anything they say or do has much influence, and usually intervene in politics mainly on matters that they feel they SHOULD do something about..."

BRIAN EARL BROWN (USA): "I think it was the US Census Bureau that came up with the word Eric Lindsay is looking for: POSSLQ, Person of Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters. Pronounced poss-el-cue, as in 'to you I would be true, if you'll be my posslq.' This does leave out same-sex relationships, so maybe it's not the perfect word, either, for that important 'other' in one's life."



BOOK REVIEWS



by Jean Weber

Marion Zimmer Bradley, CITY OF SORCERY, Daw 1984

This misleading-titled Darkover novel continues the story of Jaelle and Magda from THE SHATTERED CHAIN and THEN DARA HOUSE. It really should have been called THE QUEST (for the City...), and it has the most blatantly sequel-demanding ending of any Darkover book I can recall. It's entirely about women, and is more satisfying for that: there are no nasty men for the woman to be compared with. Here the women show the full range of human attributes: they are suspicious, jealous, loving, hating, capable, dependent, stubborn, cooperative, secretive, confused, etc.

As with many of Bradley's books in recent years, the main theme of CITY OF SORCERY is philosophical. The message was much the same as that from the Self-Transformations course I took: strip away the lies and pretensions in your life and derive personal power from self-knowledge. Do things because they are right for you (as long as you don't deliberately harm others), not because of some (usually misplaced) sense of duty. Magda, for example, spends a lot of time (as she did in the previous books) saying "I want to do X, but I can't because..." Eventually she learns to overcome the excuse of "I can't because" and confront what she REALLY wants to do with her life -- and the answer surprises her. How many of us have felt the same

Seven women go on the Quest; three are Darkovan Renunciates ("Free Amazons"), three Terran, and Magda, who is a bit of both, being Darkovan-born Terran. Each of the seven learns much about herself, in some cases things she's denied for years, simply refusing to even consider. Those whose self-discoveries pain them the most, derive the greatest personal growth. For example, Camilla, an emmasca (neutered

woman), the details of whose past are unknown to any of the Renunciates, and who has refused for 30 or 40 years to acknowledge even the possibility of having laran (esp), not only admits (to herself) that she has laran but uses it, when the life of someone she loves depends on it. Once past that hurdle, Camilla is able to admit her birth name and hence her origins, and come to terms with the ghosts of her past. Then she can move on to realizing what she truly WANTS and acting upon that knowledge, rather than going through life RE-acting to things.

The question of selfishness versus enlightened self-interest runs through the whole book. One woman I greatly appreciated was Vanessa, a Terran whose main interest in joining the Quest is to get a chance to climb the Darkovan mountains. She's fairly candid about this, and the others are rather disgusted with her. They, after all, are trying to rescue two friends who are stupidly getting themselves into deep trouble. Never mind that the two friends have CHOSEN to do this thing, and may not want to be rescued at all. Eventually the other women learn that it's not a noble deed to save people from themselves -- even when you're right and they're wrong; and that doing things for your own true reasons (wanting to climb mountains) is better than doing them for false reasons (a sense of duty). Vanessa, by the way, is not selfish; as a mountainclimber, she knows the value of cooperation (as well as having valuable practical skills that save the party more than once). Some of the others, believing themselves dedicated to altruistic aims, are in fact motivated by jealousy and other negative emotions, to the point where their judgement is impaired, endangering their mates.

I was impressed with the degree of character development of so many people in this

book, though I suspect that someone who isn't already tuned in to the philosophy may well find it polemic. It isn't feminist polemic this time, though the philosophy is one that many feminists accept. Heartily recommended.

Vonda McIntyre, SUPERLUMINAL, Pocket, 1983.

This book grew out of two previously-published stories, one of which I'd read (Aztecs). It's one of the best expansions of a story into a novel (or collection of several stories into a novel) that I've read: the pieces mesh together beautifully rather than being tacked together with a few transitional paragraphs as so many of these adaptations do.

I was a bit disappointed because the main character in the original story, a woman (Laenea), becomes a fairly minor character for most of the book, which focusses on her male lover (Radu). Not that I objected to him: I just wanted to read more about her. Another character (Orca), a woman from a family bioengineered to live in the sea like dolphins, demands a book of her own: she and her people are utterly fascinating, but relatively minor in this book.

The emphasis on Radu relates to a unique talent he discovers: he can remain away during Transit (ftl travel) and live. This shakes the entire culture of space pilots, who are an elite because they alone can survive Transit unscathed (though they must be surgically altered beforehand). But surviving transit isn't all Radu can do. He is a living instantaneous transmitter/receiver -- whether he is in Transit or not, he can communicate with someone who is. That someone is Laenea.

McIntyre does her usual excellent job of detailing the societies she describes: life on both the ocean-based shuttle station and the spacecraft seemed very real to me. Life with Orca's people was less so, but we didn't spend much time with them. My only real quibble with this book was that there was a bit too much in it, about which I wanted to know more.

Joan D Vinge, WORLD'S END, Tor, 1984.

The cover proclaims "the magnificent second novel in the cycle that began with ... THE SNOW QUEEN". This book focusses on BZ Gundhalinu, the policeman who loved the woman who is now the Queen. Gundhalinu had left her planet before the Stargate closed, and believes there is no way he can ever meet her again. Chased by the ghosts of his own past, he goes to the planet Four, where he later seeks to find his no-good brothers at a place called World's End. The eeriness of the World's End area (where time and space seem to

change at random) is magnificently portrayed, and the secret is an extremely clever one, which will also neatly lead into the next volume of this "cycle".

Vinge is superb at creating atmosphere with a few well-chosen words. She manages to touch on much of the same philosophy at Bradley (in CITY OF SORCERY), but without dwelling on it. Gundhalinu's search for his brothers is the epitome of a misplaced sense of duty (stemming from the rigid conditioning of his homeworld), especially since they are such despicable people that they ought to be allowed to destroy themselves. He has only his honor to gain by rescuing them -- but in trying, he is forced to confront himself, his past, his problems. Once he does so, he can make choices because they are right for him, rather than evading the issue "because I must do such-and-such". He still wants to save other people, but they are people who want to save themselves, and can use his help. "He had made a knowing choice to act on the side of order."

John McLoughlin, THE HELIX AND THE SWORD, Tor, 1983.

Don't be misled by the title or the cover into thinking this is fantasy. It is a very impressive science fiction book about a space culture of humans dependent on bioengineered machine-substitutes. The humans have a mythology of their origins on the planet Earth, and a horror of approaching any planet's gravity well (though they do not live in weightlessness on their habitats). Their mythology is delightful: McLoughlin has taken 20th-century historical figures, for example the Russian cosmonaut Gagarin, and used them as symbols for the religious and philosophical biases of the human cultures of the 58th century -- very similar, no doubt, to the legend-making surrounding our own past, and people like the Greek heroes.

Although the story line revolves around politics, the main fascination to me was with the whole culture, based on bioengineering. These people cannot imagine a non-living "machine". And the problem of limited resources is a major point. In a culture which refuses to approach a planet, the people are dependent on the scattered debris of the solar system for any matter they require; energy is gathered from the solar wind; and everything is recycled if at all possible. Every atom lost is knowingly lost. While waste may be for them, as it is for us, a sign of wealth, its consequences are far better known and acknowledged by space-dwellers. The story was at times weak (or trite), but the author's vision is vast and impressive.

WEBERWOMAN'S WREVENGE TWENTY-TWO
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Question marks are still missing, thanks to the computer-typer connection I'm using.

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